

Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education
Hearing "Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act:
Current and Prospective Flexibility Under No Child Left Behind"

Thursday, June 7, 2007

Opening Statement

Chairman Kildee

I'M PLEASED TO WELCOME MY FELLOW SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS, THE PUBLIC, AND OUR WITNESSES, TO THIS HEARING ON "REAUTHORIZATION OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT: CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE FLEXIBILITY UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND."

THIS IS THE EIGHTH HEARING THAT THIS SUBCOMMITTEE HAS HELD ON NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND THIS YEAR.

THE FULL COMMITTEE, OF COURSE, HAS HELD MANY HEARINGS AS WELL.

AND I THINK IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT THERE IS NO SUBJECT WE HEAR MORE ABOUT THAN FLEXIBILITY.

AS WRITTEN, THE LAW PROVIDES FOR CERTAIN FLEXIBILITIES, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAS PROVIDED OTHERS.

BUT, MANY STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATORS HAVE TOLD US THAT WHILE THEY STRONGLY SUPPORT THE LAW'S GOALS AND THE DISCUSSION ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY THAT IT HAS FOSTERED, BETTER FLEXIBILITY WOULD HELP THEM TO REACH THOSE GOALS.

I TAKE THEIR COMMENTS VERY SERIOUSLY, BECAUSE I ALWAYS HAVE BELIEVED THAT EDUCATION IS A LOCAL FUNCTION, A STATE RESPONSIBILITY AND A NATIONAL CONCERN.

AS OUR SOCIETY AND OUR WORLD HAVE BECOME MORE MOBILE AND MORE INTERCONNECTED, THAT NATIONAL CONCERN HAS GROWN.

MANY STUDENTS FROM THE HOME STATE OF EACH MEMBER OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE WILL ONE DAY MOVE TO THE HOME STATES OF EVERY OTHER MEMBER OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE.

AND REGARDLESS OF WHERE IN THE UNITED STATES STUDENTS LIVE, THEY ULTIMATELY WILL COMPETE WITH STUDENTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY.

BUT, A GREATER NATIONAL CONCERN DOES NOT MEAN A LESSER EMPHASIS ON STATE RESPONSIBILITIES AND LOCAL FUNCTIONS.

AND SO, I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM OUR WITNESSES ON HOW FLEXIBILITY UNDER NCLB HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED AND ON HOW WE CAN IMPROVE THAT FLEXIBILITY.

THEIR TESTIMONY, AS WELL AS THE COUNTLESS CONVERSATIONS THAT I KNOW EACH MEMBER HAS HAD WITH EDUCATORS AND PARENTS IN THEIR DISTRICT AND HERE IN WASHINGTON, WILL PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE COMMITTEE'S EFFORTS TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE CAN BEST HELP TO PROVIDE EVERY STUDENT WITH A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION - A GOAL WE ALL SHARE.

I ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM MR. JENNINGS ABOUT HIS CENTER'S RECENT STUDY ON TRENDS IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT SINCE NCLB TOOK EFFECT.

THE TITLE OF THAT STUDY "ANSWERING THE QUESTION THAT MATTERS MOST: HAS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INCREASED SINCE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND?" IS WELL CHOSEN, SINCE IN THE END, THE POINT OF ALL THIS IS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

OF COURSE, ONE FACTOR THAT HAS NOT INCREASED ENOUGH UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND HAS BEEN FUNDING.

WE OWE IT TO OUR CHILDREN TO ENSURE THAT THEIR SCHOOLS HAVE THE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THE EDUCATION THEY NEED AND DESERVE.

SINCE 2002, CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT HAVE UNDERFUNDED NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND BY \$56 BILLION.

THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2008 WOULD UNDERFUND THE LAW BY ANOTHER \$15 BILLION, FOR A TOTAL OF \$71 BILLION.

HOWEVER, I AM HOPEFUL THAT WITH THE CHANGES IN WASHINGTON THIS YEAR, WE WILL START TO DO BETTER.

BUT, I LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING TO WORK TOGETHER WITH MY RANKING MEMBER, MR. CASTLE, OUR FULL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND RANKING MEMBER, MR. MILLER AND MR. MCKEON, AND WITH ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, ON A BIPARTISAN REAUTHORIZATION OF NCLB THIS YEAR.

I NOW YIELD TO RANKING MEMBER CASTLE FOR HIS OPENING STATEMENT.